

Application No. 10/803,950
Amendment dated December 27, 2006
Reply to Office Action of September 27, 2006

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the title to:

ISOLATION AND PROTECTION OF DISK AREAS CONTROLLED AND FOR USE
BY FIRMWARE

Please amend paragraph 4 as follows:

[0004] In some embodiments, a "machine-accessible medium" may refer to any storage device used for storing data accessible by a computer. Examples of a machine-accessible medium may include: a magnetic hard disk; a floppy disk; an optical disk, like a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) or a digital video disk (DVD); a magnetic tape; and a memory chip; and a carrier wave used to carry machine-accessible electronic data, such as those used in transmitting and receiving e-mail or in accessing a network.

Please amend paragraphs 13 and 14 as follows:

[00013] In an exemplary embodiment, the present invention may use a computer's firmware rather than a hardware disk-controller to provide both the isolation and protection of a region of a hard disk for use by the firmware. While described in terms of a hard disk, the invention is not to be understood as being limited to application thereto, but rather, the invention may be applicable to memory devices, in general. FIG. 1 depicts an exemplary system 100 of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. The system 100 may comprise a hard disk 102 having a protected area 104 and a generally accessible area 106. The system 100 may also comprise a virtual machine 108, which may comprise firmware 110 and an operating system 112. The operating system 112 may comprise various user applications 114 and one or more device drivers 116. The device drivers 116 may include, for example, network, video, disk, or other memory device drivers. The system 100 may also comprise a virtual machine manager (VMM) 118, which may be launched from the firmware ~~108-110~~ 110 when the system 100 boots up.

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[00014] The VMM 118 may provide direct access to the generally accessible area 106 of the hard disk 102 to the operating system 112, as illustrated by arrow 120. In providing access to the generally accessible area 106, the VMM functions analogously to a hardware disk controller (or, more generally, a memory device controller). Only the firmware ~~108~~110, however, has direct access to the protected area 104 of the hard disk 102, as illustrated by arrow 122.

Please amend paragraph 16 as follows:

[00016] One possible application of the system 100 may be to provide a ~~software-only~~ redundant array of independent disks (RAID) controlled by software only (also referred to herein as a "software RAID") from the firmware running on the host CPU. In a software RAID application, the firmware 108 may reserve multiple areas on one or more hard disks. Each protected area may then act as one disk in a RAID.